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**Western Kentucky University news for the Council on Postsecondary Education, February 2016**

For more WKU news, visit [www.wku.edu/news](http://www.wku.edu/news).

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**WKU President Gary A. Ransdell to retire in 2017**

President Gary A. Ransdell announced his intention to retire in 2017. His last day serving as President will be June 30, 2017, and following a brief sabbatical, he will officially retire from WKU Dec. 31, 2017.

“After considerable thought, Julie and I have decided that 20 years on the job is long enough to fulfill the commitment we made in 1997 to lead a transformation of our great University,” Dr. Ransdell said. “We have done our best to do just that. WKU is a dramatically different institution today than it was 20 years ago – financially, physically, intellectually and attitudinally. Serving my alma mater has been a dream come true. This University has been my passion and has had my full focus and maximum energy. I will pursue the next 17 months with all I’ve got and will work to ensure that WKU is positioned as well as possible for new leadership in 2017.”

Board Chair Freddie Higdon of Lebanon, Kentucky, said: “I want to assure the WKU family that we will conduct an exhaustive search to find the right person to serve WKU going forward. We will appoint a search committee in due course with the intent of proceeding this spring with a national search.

“President Ransdell has been a tireless leader for WKU. I can think of no other single individual who has had more impact in a community and in a Kentucky university environment than Gary Ransdell. He is currently the longest serving university president in Kentucky and has earned tremendous respect from his higher education colleagues and from our state’s leadership and business community.”

Dr. Ransdell was named WKU’s ninth president on Sept. 12, 1997. Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from WKU in 1973 and a Master of Public Service degree in Public Administration from WKU in 1974.

His professional career began at WKU as a field representative in the Office of University School Relations, now the Office of Admissions. He also served as Associate Director of Alumni Affairs at WKU from 1978 to 1981. In 1981 Dr. Ransdell was named Director of Alumni Relations at Southern Methodist University, and in 1987 he was named Vice President at Clemson University, where he served until coming back to WKU in 1997.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2016/01/29/bor-ransdell-jan2016/>



*Dr. Gary A. Ransdell*

**SACSCOC reaffirms accreditation for WKU**

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Board of Trustees has reaffirmed accreditation for WKU.

“Official accreditation reaffirmation is very important in the life of any college or university,” WKU President Gary A. Ransdell said.

Every 10 years, each university in the southern region must submit a request for reaffirmation of accreditation by SACSCOC. In addition to providing an affirmation of quality, regional accreditation is needed for students to be eligible for federal financial aid.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2015/12/08/sacscoc-accreditation-2015/>

### **Two Gatton Academy students named Emperor Science Award winners**

Two students in the Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky have been named winners of the inaugural Emperor Science Award.

The Emperor Science Award program is an initiative designed to encourage high school students to explore careers in science, specifically cancer research and care, through a mentoring opportunity. The program is made possible by founding donors Genetech, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Novartis and through partners Stand Up to Cancer and PBS Learning Media.

Makenzie Daniels and Haley Dicken, both first-year students at The Gatton Academy, will work alongside cancer scientists on a rewarding, multi-week cancer research project. Additionally, Daniels and Dicken will receive a Google Chrome Notebook to enhance their studies, a \$1,500 stipend for their expenses, and the opportunity to continue the mentoring program throughout high school.

Stand Up To Cancer and PBS Learning Media received around 1,200 applications from 10th and 11th grade students throughout the U.S. who are interested in pursuing a career in science research. In total, 100 students from 40 states have been named this year's winners. The Gatton Academy students are Kentucky's only award winners.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2016/02/01/gatton-emperor-2016/>



### **U.S. News ranks WKU online programs among best in nation**

In its annual ranking of the best online degree programs, U.S. News & World Report has named WKU among the top schools nationwide in five areas.

WKU ranked third in the nation in the Best Online Bachelor Degree Programs category, second to Penn State and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, which tied for first place.

The ranking also placed WKU's M.A. in Criminology among the top 12 online graduate degree programs in the Best Online Criminal Justice

Programs category.

Other WKU programs were ranked among the top 100 online graduate programs in the nation, including Best Online Education Degree (online M.A.E. programs for teachers), Best Online MBA Degree and Best Online Nursing Degree for the M.S.N. program.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2016/01/12/online-usnews-2016/>

### **WKU student awarded U.S. Foreign Service Internship**

Alexandria Knipp, a WKU student from Olive Hill, has been awarded a prestigious U.S. Foreign Service Internship from the U.S. Department of State.

Knipp, a sophomore with majors in International Affairs and Arabic, will spend one summer in Washington, D.C., and a second summer at a U.S. Embassy overseas. In addition to the paid internships, Knipp will receive several extra instructional modules to prepare her for working in the State Department and eventually as a Foreign Service officer.

"I am very passionate about pursuing a career with the State Department as a Foreign Service officer, so this program is exactly what I'm looking for," Knipp said.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2015/11/13/foreign-service-internship/>



*Alexandria Knipp*

### **WKU continues to climb in Open Doors study abroad rankings**

For the third consecutive year, WKU climbed in the Institute for International Education's (IIE) U.S. study abroad rankings, released in the November 2015 Open Doors Report.

WKU is ranked 19th in the nation among master's institutions for the total number of study abroad students and is the only public institution in Kentucky to appear in the study abroad rankings. WKU ranked 23rd in 2014, 32nd in 2013 and 39th in 2012.

<https://wkunews.wordpress.com/2016/01/28/2015-opendoors-report/>